

Letter from Gilbert Grosvenor to Alexander Graham Bell and Mabel Hubbard Bell, February 1, 1910

National Geographic Society Washington, D. C. Gilbert H. Grosvenor, Editor not sent February 1, 1910. My dear Father and Little Mother:

I have been giving a great deal of thought the past week to the A. A. P. T. S. D. As you know my father has been a teacher for forty-three years and I look upon his profession as the noblest in the world and I should be glad of an opportunity of helping a work which in any way, however remote, would bring happiness or inspiration to young people. This motive is quite apart from my constant desire to help the cause to which Elsie's family have contributed so much energy and love.

I am very much afraid however that my association on your committee may prove as much embarrassment to you as it will to me. This Millwards incident is, I fear, only a prelude of what will happen. I distinctly said to you both and David that I would not employ him in my office, and while I did say he was the best man you had found, that did not in my mind imply he was the man for you as no systematic or thorough search in the right direction for a man for the A. A. P. T. S. D. has ever been made by you or anyone. Your man has got to be the leader in your enterprise and in a way this requires greater qualities than a literary assistant in my office. He must not only have a news sense but he must have common sense above all and know how to get two dollars worth for one dollar , where he can honestly.

The last thing I told David before he went to New York was 2 to go slow in the matter of engaging Millwards and I do not feel that I am in any way responsible for your embarrassment, especially as I understood the selection of the man was not to be considered at all at the New York meeting.

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As I have been through the mill in just what you are trying to do I can perhaps form a pretty good idea of the qualities demanded for this position. I have seen many societies during the past years attempt what the National Geographic Society has done and all of them have miserably failed and I have been repeatedly approached to become actively identified with them, but knowing the difficulties in the way and the patience and perseverance and work required in all such plans, I have hitherto been unwilling to assume responsibility for anything more than the National Geographic Society. It is a very easy matter to form plans for a Magazine such as you propose, but to put such plans in practical and successful execution is as much of a business as building up a bank or any institution. I can see this perhaps better than you and it is for this reason that I insist that time must be taken to looking carefully for the right man. To expect a man in a week is absurd unless a great piece of luck occurs; to get him in a month would be fortunate. You paid the penalty of the wrong man in "Science" on which you spent \$75,000 and which was sold for \$25.

Our success in the National Geographic Society seems perhaps 3 easy and not difficult to imitate but you forget the years of patient study I made of the Magazine before I was ready for the boom and you forget also that I had an unusual training and an unusual college record which had given me the basis for my work, all of which Millwarde has not. For years I have wanted you to reorganize the Association as you have just done and have repeatedly urged you to do so. (I enclose a copy of my letter to you under date of April 17, 1908, outlining practically the plan now adopted. This letter was sent you at a time when you were seriously considering keeping the A. A. P. T. S. D. and the Volta Bureau apart as separate institutions). I should have spoken much stronger about Millwarde but for my fear of discouraging you in your plans of reorganization which I had so long desired to see you put through and which I congratulate you on having accomplished at last. However I object vigorously to be made responsible for the misunderstanding. You did not tell me that you were asking Millwarde to the dinner in New York and I did not know he had been present until Elsie told me on her return last night. Meanwhile I am making enquiries for a desirable person and have reason to hope to secure one before long. Since

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seeing you last other facts about Millwarde have developed which make him absolutely impossible to my mind.

I am so afraid of a repetition of similar experiences which will eventually lead to family ill-feeling that I am inclined to believe I had better retire from your committee. Our ideals are the same but 4 our methods of doing things so utterly at variance, that I believe you will get along better without my assistance and I am ready to retire if you desire.

Affectionately, Gilbert H. Grosvenor